



UNITED PROFESSIONAL & SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION LOCAL 1222

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Testimony of Matt Geer, United Professional & Service Employees Union (UPSEU), Local 1222 in Opposition to Section 15 of Raised Bill No. 396 – An Act Concerning Revisions to the Teachers’ Retirement System Statutes

March 25, 2022

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Matt Geer and I am the Regional Director for the United Professional & Service Employees Union (UPSEU), Local 1222.

I, on behalf of UPSEU, Local 1222, am testifying in **opposition** to Raised Bill No. 396 – An Act Concerning Revisions to the Teachers’ Retirement System Statutes, specifically Section 15, as it relates to teachers at the Children’s Center of Hamden and their participation in the State Teachers’ Retirement System.

UPSEU, Local 1222 represents members in a variety of different classifications included but not limited to teachers, childcare employees, clerical employees, operations and maintenance employees, food service employees and employees in manufacturing. Of importance and relevance for this matter is that UPSEU, Local 1222 represents the teachers employed at the Children’s Center of Hamden, who work in the Whitney Hall School, a state approved special education program.

The Children’s Center of Hamden is a critical part of the Hamden community and of this state - providing academic instruction to Connecticut’s most ‘at risk’ youth. Students at the Children’s Center of Hamden are those unable to learn and benefit in a public school setting due to their significant specialized needs. It is through the support of our hardworking and dedicated teachers that these challenging students have an opportunity to reach academic success. This academic success in turn translates to a positive outlook and hope for their future.

However, as a non-profit agency, the Children’s Center of Hamden struggles to compete with the teacher salary and benefit packages made available to teachers in the traditional public sector setting, which makes filling teacher vacancies as well as retaining teachers a most difficult task. The elimination of the State Teachers’ Retirement System would certainly further impede and exacerbate this issue, causing a devastating impact to these

students, this community and our state. As you are aware, Section 15 of Raised Bill No. 396 proposes to eliminate retirement benefits through the State Teachers' Retirement System for teachers at the Children's Center of Hamden and this is simply unconscionable. The teachers at the Children's Center of Hamden are certified educators that provide invaluable education to some of our state's most challenging and at-risk children. To eliminate this retirement benefit for teachers at the Children's Center of Hamden will be detrimental to the education of these children and overall to the Hamden community, as well as the future of our entire state. As a result, UPSEU, Local 1222 **strongly opposes** Section 15 of Raised Bill No. 396.

The Children's Center of Hamden has an over 185-year tradition of providing 'at risk' children with their right to an education by highly qualified educators, our members. Section 15 of Senate Bill 396 puts that tradition of excellence at risk, by failing the teachers at the Children's Center of Hamden.

Please stand up for at-risk youth, education, union jobs, the Hamden community and our state. I urge each of you to reject Section 15 of Raised Bill No. 396.